

Hunter-Gatherer Trade in Wild Forest Products in the Early Centuries A.D. with the Port of Broach, India



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A DEBATE HAS BEEN GOING ON since the 1980s about the nature of twentieth-century hunter-gatherers, also known by the term *foragers* (Lewin 1988; Stiles 1992a). One paradigm assumes that foraging societies are to a great extent remnants from the past and were until recently isolated. Researchers using this paradigm assume that hunter-gatherers subsist for the most part from wild foods, at least until very recently, and that their activities can be used to build models about prehistoric societies. This approach can be labeled as “evolutionary ecological,” and many studies focus on subsistence systems, exchange, foodsharing, and settlement patterns. Methods include cost-benefit analyses, optimal foraging strategies, input-output, and time-allocation studies. The history, cultural features, and interrelations with nonforaging societies are largely ignored. The Harvard Kalahari Project is generally acknowledged to be the modern founder of this paradigm (Lee 1979; Lewin 1988), although many others now participate (e.g., Hawkes et al. 1982, 1987; Hill and Hawkes 1983; Hill and Hurtado 1989; Kaplan and Hill 1985).

The second paradigm can be called “historical particularism,” and the proponents see historical features of present foraging societies as being much more important than the “evolutionary ecologists” would admit for explaining the nature of their socioeconomic systems. Each society has a long history, and it commonly includes interactions with neighbors and some experience with food production. Some see trade as being a crucial factor in the survival and even existence of past and present hunter-gatherer groups since the Neolithic mode of production appeared (Dunn 1975; Headland and Reid 1989; Hoffman 1984; Stiles 1981). Modeling the behavior of these people onto Pleistocene hominids is not seen as a necessarily useful pursuit, and more attention is paid to the particular cultural features of each society, including their contemporary circumstances. These circumstances often include threats to survival as a result of land alienation and resource loss.

This paper aims to reconstruct how an ancient hunter-gatherer trading system might have operated, using the Gujarati port city of Broach (known as Bharuch today) as an example. The first and fifth centuries A.D. receive most attention be-

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cause of information available from ancient writings. Broach was the main port of northwestern India from at least the first century A.D. until Surat replaced it after becoming a Moghul port in the fourteenth century. The ancient system is contrasted with the current situation and related to policy concerning Indian tribals who depend on forest resources and to biodiversity conservation. Tribals, or indigenous peoples, have come to be recognized as critical actors in managing wildlife resources in sustainable fashion, and the commercialization of forest products is a principal strategy (Baker 1989; World Resources Institute et al. 1992). The term *tribal* is used in India to refer to a range of low-status groups who normally do not belong to the Hindu caste system, but not all engage in foraging. However, they are also often called *Vanya Jati* ("Forest Caste"), indicating their association with the forest in outsiders' minds (Lal 1986:3).

A major point of this paper is to illustrate how an appreciation of the history of a foraging group, and of the systemic relationships in which they participated in a larger regional society, can lead to a better understanding of contemporary foragers. Foraging societies today are under great stress and their cultural survival is threatened. Paradigms in anthropological research are highly relevant to this situation. Northwestern India provides one more example to those cited above that twentieth-century foragers should not be used as direct representatives of Pleistocene life.

HISTORY OF BROACH AND TRADE

Broach is located in the area of Gujarat known as Konkan, on the eastern side of the Bay of Cambay (or Khambhat). It is currently several kilometers from the sea on the north bank of the Narmada River (Fig. 1), with the port situated near the mouth of the river to facilitate access by large vessels. Before the twentieth century, the river was used both to bring in commodities from central India and for maritime import-export by use of small boats that sailed to and from the ocean vessels. Access to the port was difficult because of the strong tides and many shoals, and ships with inexperienced captains could founder and be lost (Casson 1989:79); thus trade from the port must have been lucrative for merchants to take such risks. The original name of the city was Bharukaccha, a corruption of Brighu or Bhiru, a minister of the king of Roruka in Sind. The name means "field of Brighu" (Anonymous 1908; Chakraborti 1966). In the first century A.D. it was known as Barygaza by Greco-Roman writers.

Broach was an important port under the Mauryan empire from c. 320 to c. 185 B.C. (Majumdar 1977), and the Jatakas spoke of voyages to Suvarnabhumi (probably Sumatra) in the third century B.C. (Chakraborti 1966:63). Although the records are incomplete, it seems that Indo-Greeks—descendants of Alexander the Great's conquests—controlled Broach for a period between 185 B.C. and the first century A.D. Coins with Greek inscriptions of the earlier Indo-Greek kings Menander and Apollodotus were in circulation in Broach in the first century A.D. (Casson 1989:81).

Scythians from the plains of central Asia were pushed south by invading Yueh-chi from western China in the first century B.C. These Scythians, known in India as Shakas, took the Broach area in the first century A.D. The first century A.D. *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* stated that Nahapana, of a Western Kshatrapas (Satraps)

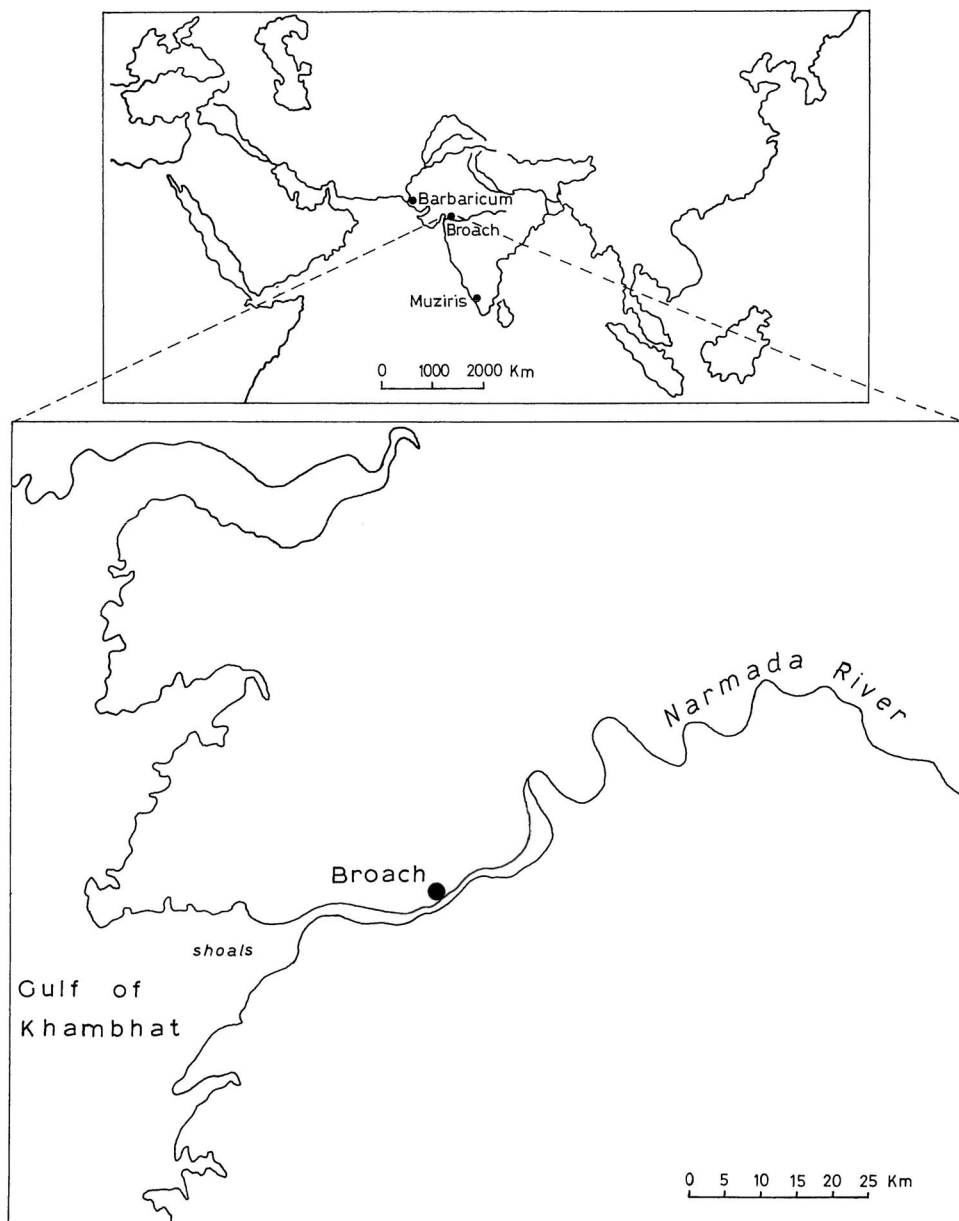


Fig. 1. Location today of Broach.

Shaka dynasty, ruled Broach and a region encompassing as far north as Ajmer in Rajasthan, west to Kathiawar and southern Gujarat, to the east into Malwa, and in the south to Nasik and Pune in Maharashtra (Casson 1989:81; Chakraborti 1966:93; Fig. 2). Nahapana may have been subject to the Kushana empire to the northwest, which was derived from a section of the Turko-Mongolian Yueh-chi. The imports to Broach indicated that it was a sophisticated, industrial city with

great wealth and an active trading community (Casson 1989:22–23), and Chakrabarti (1966:93) concluded that “. . . it served as the main gateway of northern and also of southern India. All trade routes from the north and south . . . converged there.”

Maritime trade was very vigorous at that time in the Indian Ocean, involving Romans, Arabians, Indians, Indonesians, and Chinese (Chandra 1987), and even East Africa (Stiles 1992b). For example, 120 Roman ships a year were going to India under Augustus (Verlinden 1987:32). The monsoon winds were “discovered” by Hippalus in the first century A.D., which allowed vessels to sail directly to India from Arabia without following the coast. This added to the ascendancy of Broach over ports to the west in Sind, such as Barbaricum at the mouth of the Indus. In addition, the Roman-Parthian conflict closed the overland route between China and the West, diverting trade to Broach (Thapar 1990:118). Merchants from Rome to Indonesia mingled in Indian cities to exchange wine, manufactured goods, silks, cotton, spices, aromatics, ivory, rhinoceros horn, medicinal herbs, precious stones and metals, and a hundred other commodities from all corners of the known world.

The Satavahana dynasty took Broach briefly in the late first and early second centuries A.D., but by A.D. 150 Broach was back in the hands of the Shakas and King Rudradaman extended his rule to Cutch, Sind, western and southern Rajasthan, and the Narmada Valley (Majumdar 1977:203). The Shakas were finally replaced by Gupta empire rulers c. A.D. 395 when Chandragupta II defeated Rudrasimha III and took Broach (Majumdar 1977:241). The Guptas controlled Broach until the late fifth century and, between c. A.D. 475–750, various kingdoms fought with each other and ruled Broach at various times (Majumdar 1977; Thapar 1990). The Rastrakuta dynasty from the northern Deccan took Broach from the Chalyukas c. 750 and held it for more than two centuries, but the Chalyukas retook it c. A.D. 975 and held it until 1174. Again Broach passed under the sway of various warring kingdoms until invading Muslim armies from Sind took it in 1297 and put it under the Delhi Sultanate. Broach later fell to the Moghuls, came under Portuguese influence in the sixteenth century, Dutch in the seventeenth, and British in the eighteenth to mid-twentieth centuries, until it reverted to Indian rule in 1947.

HUNTER-GATHERERS OF NORTHWESTERN INDIA

The region under discussion consists of the “catchment area” of Indian trade items that came from forests to Broach in the early centuries A.D. This area consists roughly of the territories under the political control of the Shakas and Guptas in which foragers were likely to have lived, as determined by the distribution of forests and the documented ancient trade items. From inscriptions and the *Periplus* we know the general range of control of the Shaka king Nahapana in the first century A.D. and of the Guptas in most of the fifth century (Fig. 2). These were very active periods of trade and also of Indian cultural and religious spread to the east into Southeast Asia and China. Buddhist and Hindu influence became very important in the rise of the early Southeast Asian kingdoms of Funan, Champa, Srivijaya, and others (Hall 1964). The relevance to hunter-gatherers of the foregoing is that the religious practices, crafts and artwork, and medicinal pharmacopoeia

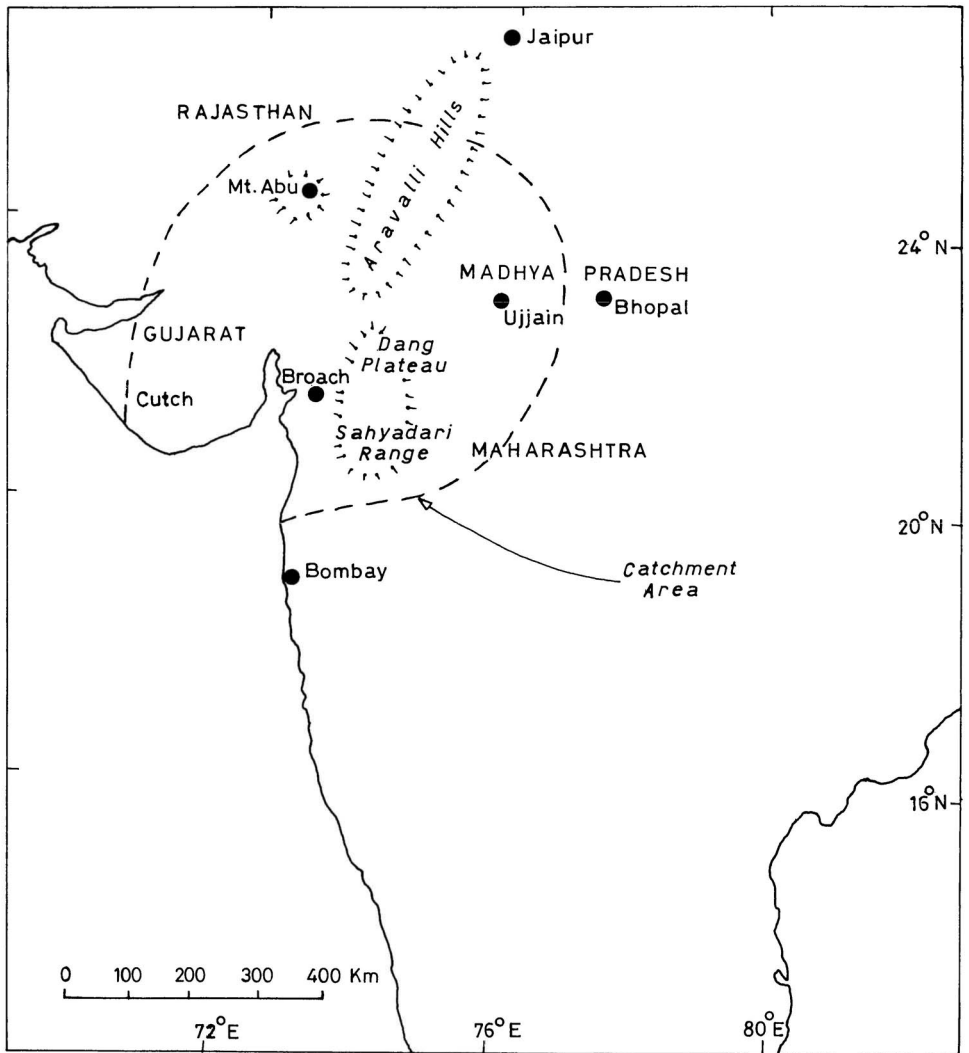


Fig. 2. Catchment area for trade products supplied to Broach by hunter-gatherers in the first to fifth centuries A.D.

associated with Buddhist and Hindu schools of medicine all employ enormous quantities of wild plant and animal products (Wolters 1967).

There has obviously been a great deal of cultural and socioeconomic change, immigration, and mixing of ethnic groups over the past 2000 years; thus most surviving tribals cannot serve as direct descendants of the actual foraging communities existing between the first and fifth centuries A.D. in northwestern India. One large group, however, consisting of several subgroups, can act as a model. These are the Bhils. Historical references locate them several hundred years ago in Gujarat and Rajasthan (Naik 1956), and they are considered to be the indigenous inhabitants preceding other tribals and the Rajputs (Lal 1986:30). They are also referred to in the famous Indian epic *Mahabharata*, and tradition says that the *Ramayana* was

authored by the Bhil Valiya. The events of both of these literary works predate the first century A.D., though current versions were written during the period under examination here (Thapar 1990:31); thus it is likely that Bhil ancestors existed in northwestern India in the first century A.D.

Although the way of life, status, and social organization of the Bhils have changed considerably over the past few centuries, the main products they exploit cannot have changed that much, though they have been impoverished by forest degradation. Even products that have been replaced in international trade, such as natural dyes and tannins, are still collected today for local use. Some writers conclude that settlement patterns are much the same today as they were in the ancient past (Roat 1987), though I disagree with that. Tribals have certainly been forced out of rich agricultural plains and valleys and are concentrated in hilly areas today, and settled agriculture with irrigation has undoubtedly changed settlement locations. Lal (1986:17) noted that many tribals fled to the forests after the Muslim and Maratha invasions beginning in the ninth century A.D. Only nomadic groups such as the Van Vagris can survive outside of hill areas (Misra 1990), and even they are finding it increasingly difficult to find game and wild plant foods in the nonagricultural season when they are not employed (personal observation, March 1992).

In 1981, tribals made up 14.2 percent of the population of Gujarat, numbering 4,850,000 people, and 12.2 percent of Rajasthan, with 4,200,000 people. The western parts of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra are also within the catchment area of Broach, and they have even higher percentages of tribals, with 23.6 percent (about 12 million) and 23.1 percent (about 13.8 million), respectively, of the total population (Roat 1987:5). Their settlements are highly correlated with remaining forest areas, and studies have shown that use and trade of "Minor Forest Products" are still very important to tribal economies (Lal 1986; Tewari 1989). In the past, before tribals were forced by the government to take up intensive, non-swidden agriculture, dependence on the forest was much higher (Joshi 1989). Indigenous forest people thus form significant minorities today in northwestern India, with the Bhils being the most numerous.

Tribals politically were much stronger in the past. The first Gupta king married a princess of the Lichchhavi tribe in the fourth century A.D., and there are references to "tribal republics" and tribal kings against which Gupta rulers and others waged campaigns in northwestern India. The breaking of their power led to the weakening of Gupta rule, because the buffer they previously had formed against Kushana and White Hun attacks was now gone. The fourth century marked a time of major transformation of relationships between animist tribals and the Hindu kingdoms: "The relationship between the Guptas and the tribal republics was a curious one. The Guptas were proud of their connection with the Lichchhavis, but they attacked the western republics. It is interesting that the republican tradition should have survived for so many centuries in the west, despite the repeated invasions of this area. Samudra Gupta's campaign was the final blow to the declining tribal system. The old conflict of caste versus tribe had resulted in a victory for caste" (Thapar 1990:138).

Republic is probably not the correct term to apply to tribal society during the early centuries A.D. It is much more likely that tribal society was organized by clan lineages (as it still is), ranked hierarchically, and that "chiefs" or "kings" with minimal power were selected from highly ranked clans by councils of elders.

Short-lived dynasties could have existed, as long as the families could continue providing suitable leaders. Territorial boundaries were probably indistinct between tribes, and the areas under the control of one ethnic group or confederation are probably better described as a chiefdom. The Bhils of Dangs district in Gujarat have the only rajas (kings) in India still receiving state pensions, in recognition of their refusal to submit to the British (Surendran 1992). The Bhils have long enjoyed a respected reputation as archer warriors, and they are recognized as having been important in 1579 at the battle of Haldighati near Udaipur in Rajasthan when the Rajput maharana defeated a Moghul army.

In pre-colonial times, rural communities generally had free access to forests, but they commonly paid tribute to the local feudal authority and a small levy on exported products (Tewari 1989:83). Although hard data are scarce, it is also thought that tribals before the nineteenth century had no concept of profit and they traded entirely by barter to obtain needed items. Nontribal merchants, or middlemen, exploited the barter system of economic exchange to make good profits (Lal 1986:67).

Today the Bhils along with other tribal groups such as the Garasias, Dublas, and others total more than 50 million people and are placed in the lowest socioeconomic groups in India. They depend principally on agriculture and agricultural labor for survival, but almost all families engage in collecting and selling forest products (Lal 1986). Traditionally, tribals sell or trade the products at weekly markets called *haats*, but state governments have intervened since independence to force tribals to sell to state monopolies or government-sanctioned middlemen. Tribals are commonly exploited by these institutions and many restrictions have been put on forest utilization since colonial times (Joshi 1989). Current policy and practice in India encourage the destruction of forest resources, because tribals are no longer able to practice the more sustainable management strategies from pre-independence times (Joshi 1989).

TRADE SYSTEMS

Hunter-gatherer trade with Gujarati ports is attested to as early as 2000 B.C. at Lothal. Possehl and Kennedy (1979) hypothesized that the beads that were being manufactured and exported from Lothal were made from precious stones and ivory supplied by hunter-gatherers represented archaeologically by microlithic sites contemporary with the ancient port.

First to Fifth Centuries A.D.

The Mauryan empire created the administrative and institutional framework that was followed and modified in later centuries. Although there was a central capital for both the Shaka and Gupta kingdoms, Broach would have been ruled in autonomous fashion by a viceroy appointed by the king (Thapar 1990:144–145). Various types of guilds controlled all economic activity. There were guilds for silk weavers, cotton weavers, merchants, blacksmiths, potters, fishermen, butchers, and almost everything one could think of. Merchant guilds were associated with Buddhism from at least 350 B.C. (Chakraborti 1966:313), and they received loans and donations from royalty and wealthy people with which to build or maintain

Buddhist shrines, support poor people or monks, and generally carry out meritorious deeds. Hindu Brahmins were more rooted to land and agriculture; the Buddhist church (*Sangha*) invested in trade. In the early centuries A.D., however, Buddhism and Hinduism interacted and it was common for Brahmins to take part in Buddhist ritual. Jainism emerged in the third century B.C. in India, incorporating aspects of both religions. Jains became merchants because of the religious prohibition against killing any living creature, which meant they could not farm. They became specialized in international trade and concentrated in northwestern India (Thapar 1990:65).

How might hunter-gatherers have interacted with ancient trading systems? Because they did not live in cities they probably did not have guilds of their own, though Fairservis (1983) noted that hunters may have been referred to in second millennium B.C. Harappan seals as a distinct class of people. Because products gathered and hunted in rural areas were used in a variety of crafts, in cuisine, in medicine, in religious ritual, and other uses, it is probable that foragers traded at open markets where they could sell to a variety of buyers in one place. The periodic rural market was common all over the ancient world, and still exists in many parts of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Urban merchants or their agents would have attended the markets to buy and exchange commodities for hunter-gatherer products and then transported them back to the city—Broach in this case. There they would have been distributed to the various craftsmen and users, though some of the products would have been crafts made by the foragers themselves. There may even have been relationships in which certain forager families had special links to specific merchants or agents, as seen in southern India (Morris 1982).

The resource areas for foragers would have included the Aravalli Hills that run north-south from Rajasthan to Gujarat, the Dang plateau and Sahyadri Range to the southeast, the dry forests of the southern Rajasthan and Cutch plains, and the forests of western Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. Products mentioned in ancient writings that would have been supplied by hunter-gatherers in northwestern India are shown in Table 1.

The most important of these items for export abroad were the first four of both the Animal and Plant categories and both the Mineral categories. Incense cannot be underestimated in importance. As Chaudhuri (1985:18) has noted: "The restricted sources of supply contrast strongly with the wide use of incense. In India and China religious worship and funerary rites were incomplete without its burning." Wolters (1967) hypothesized that the seventh to twelfth century A.D. Srivijaya empire in Southeast Asia rose primarily as a result of the control of aromatic substances. Frankincense (*Boswellia* sp.), myrrh (*Commiphora myrrha*), bdellium (*Commiphora mukul*), and the sandal tree (*Santalum album*) are all native to the Broach catchment area (Lal 1986). In addition, the *Periplus* mentioned that Broach exported costus, nard, ivory, and agate (Casson 1989:81). Indian ivory was an important export to Rome and Persia in the early centuries A.D., and carved ivory was even more important. An Indian ivory statuette was found at Pompeii, which places it before A.D. 79 (Chakraborti 1966:218-219). Wild animals were high-value, low-volume exports to Rome. The *Periplus*, Pliny, Ptolemy, and others mentioned lions, tigers, elephants, monkeys, snakes, parrots, peacocks, and other animals, that came from India (Chakraborti 1966:214). The live animals and their products, such as ivory, skins, furs, horns, and so forth, were most likely obtained

TABLE 1. PROBABLE HUNTER-GATHERER PRODUCTS SUPPLIED TO BROACH DURING FIRST TO FIFTH CENTURIES A.D.

Animal
Wild animals exported to Rome (lions, tigers, parrots, etc.)
Skins, hides, furs, and leather
Ivory, rhino horn, antelope horns
Lac dye
Honey and beeswax
Plant
Spices: nard, spikenard, costus, long pepper
Aromatic resins: frankincense, myrrh, and bdellium
Medicinals: aloes and various roots, bark, fruits, etc.
Woods: ebony, teak, blackwood, sandalwood
Tannins: several tree species produce bark from which tannins for leather making can be extracted
Dyes: the bark, dried flowers, and leaves of several species produce red, yellow, and black dyes
Fiber: ropes, twine, cordage, etc., from bark or roots
Weaving and basketry: palm leaves and wild sisal
Bamboo: used in construction, containers, matting, etc.
Gums: gum arabic and karaya used in foods, cosmetics, etc.
Foods: fruits, nuts, spinach, tubers, rhizomes
Mineral
Raw materials for beads and cameos: agate and carnelian
Precious stones: diamonds and garnets

with the assistance of the people who shared their habitat: local foragers. In Rome, the monetary value of some of the items was considerable, ranging from 3 to 75 dinarii per pound for bdellium and nard, respectively (Casson 1989).

Most of the other items were consumed locally, though foreign traders made use of artisanal products, bamboo, and cordage as well in their work. All of these products together made up a substantial proportion of northwestern Indian exports in Shaka and Gupta times (Chakraborti 1966; Miller 1969); thus hunter-gatherers must have been crucial components of the international trading systems, and they constituted a type of specialist primary producer of natural resource commodities.

Hunter-gatherers were equally important in Southeast Asia for supplying forest products (Dunn 1975; Hoffman 1984; Wolters 1967), and they were even more important in East Africa, where they provided the wealth that led to the rise of the Swahili civilization (Stiles 1981, 1992b, 1993a).

In exchange for the natural resource products, the hunter-gatherers received grain, salt, metal tools, cloth, and other items that the forest does not provide. Based on historical observations, it is likely that only a segment of the tribal community depended solely on foraging. Most of the Bhil ancestors probably practiced slash-and-burn agriculture and some livestock-rearing while living in villages. Bhil foragers would have lived in nomadic camps in the forest and they probably would have forged reciprocal links with an agricultural community. If they were not already of the same ethnic group, they would have adopted the language and many cultural features of the agricultural group, facilitating trade relations. The fact that Bhil communities speak the same dialect as their neighbors today supports this view. Because they lived in their traditional areas before the arrival of the Hindu groups, they must once have had their own language, which

they have now lost. This is a common phenomenon seen elsewhere in the world where hunter-gatherers have established trading systems (Headland and Reid 1989).

It is impossible to know whether any subsistence foragers existed at that time in northwestern India who were entirely independent, but it seems highly unlikely given the level of trading activity, population density, and extent of centralized political organization. In fact, one could say that wherever trading opportunities presented themselves anywhere in the world, foragers were quick to exploit the advantages. Such paragons of the isolated, independent hunter-gatherer as the Bushmen (San) of southern Africa and the Australian Aborigine are now known to have had trading relations with agricultural peoples and to have engaged in low-intensity agriculture in the past (Berndt and Berndt 1947; Schrire 1980; Wilmsen and Denbow 1990).

Theory

To relate the historical circumstances of foraging societies who become specialist traders to anthropological theory, one could hypothesize that this formalized systemic relationship develops as a result of resource partitioning. At low levels of agricultural and manufacturing (i.e., crafts) intensity, all segments of the community can engage in foraging for forest products. This situation still exists in many parts of Madagascar, for example, where foraging is very important for many agricultural communities. There are a few foraging groups (e.g., Stiles 1991), but formalized trading links with agricultural societies are not developed.

When foraging becomes too costly in terms of time and labor for agricultural and manufacturing communities, resources are partitioned and foragers become "managers" of wild forest resources. This seems to happen when two variables exist: (1) labor-intensive agriculture (including pastoralism), and (2) the proximity of extensive wild resources and foragers. A new type of social system is created when subsistence hunter-gatherers become specialist traders. Although the system has variants, caused by particular historical, political, and socioeconomic factors, striking similarities can be seen when comparing examples, such as the Negritos of Southeast Asia (Dunn 1975; Headland and Reid 1991), the Boni and Wata of Kenya (Stiles 1981), the Aka of the northeastern Congo (Bahuchet and Guillaume 1982), the Punan of Borneo (Hoffman 1984), and various groups of southern India (Bird-David 1988; Fox 1969; Gardner 1985), to name just a few.

Typically, the foragers become subservient, low-status members of the larger society and they adopt the language and other cultural features of the dominant group. This is believed to enhance social and commercial relationships between the foragers and the dominant community. Formal specialist forager trader systems, which include many cultural institutions with the dominant group, can only develop if the foragers perceive that land use and tenure rights are secured. The question of land and resource security could relate to Woodburn's (1982) "immediate" and "delayed" return hunter-gatherer categories. Hunter-gatherers that have no socioeconomic arrangement with stronger neighbors are unlikely to invest much time and labor into delayed-return capital goods or technologies that can be confiscated or destroyed.

The security factor might also be relevant to the question of what various writers have called "free," "primary," or "independent" hunter-gatherers versus "serf," "secondary," or "dependent" ones. The first are subsistence hunter-gatherers, thought to be isolated from outside groups; the second are involved in relationships with a dominant agricultural group, and are called "encapsulated" by Woodburn (1982). The Bhils today are encapsulated by their more powerful neighbors, relegated to "tribal" and noncaste, untouchable status. When this system developed can only be guessed at. There are indications that the Bhil ancestors had their own "republic" at least up to the fourth century A.D. (Thapar 1990:139) and thus were independent. After Samudra Gupta's conquest, they became subject to the Gupta empire and presumably subservient to their Hindu rulers. It could even have occurred earlier, as it did in southern India. Morris (1982) stated that Tamil texts of c. 200 B.C. indicate that the Western Ghats were occupied by trading hunter-gatherers, and that Tamil kingdoms exported some of the products collected by them. In any case, foragers were certainly providing important wild forest trade items to Broach by the first century A.D.

HISTORY, PARADIGMS, AND POLICY

International trading networks of forest products have undergone a profound transformation since the sixteenth century and European expansion into the Indian Ocean. Minor forest products and wildlife have been replaced in importance by timber and cash crops such as tea, coffee, cotton, and palm oil. This transformation of relationships to the land and of trade has resulted in wholesale destruction of moist tropical forests. These lands are the habitats and ecosystems upon which millions of species of organisms depend for survival, and they are important contributors to regulating climate and productive fertility of soil (World Resources Institute et al. 1992). They also provide the resources for the survival of hundreds of millions of people.

Recent studies have shown that the sustainable exploitation of nontimber forest products in trade yields a much higher economic benefit than timber or livestock (Balick and Mendelsohn 1991; De Beer and McDermott 1989; Peters et al. 1989). Although the belief that tribals are "natural conservationists" is probably a myth, tribals and indigenous peoples are much better placed to develop and carry out sustainable management schemes in forests because of their attachment to the land and their indigenous knowledge systems. Concern for basic human rights also argues that indigenous inhabitants of an area should have first claim to the resources found there and upon which they have depended for survival over the centuries (Stiles 1993b).

Studies on tribal policy in India have concluded that the development of trade in forest products is important for their economic development (Lal 1986; Masvi and Pandya 1981) and sometimes is even the key (Tewari 1989:79). Sustainable exploitation and equitable trade relationships must be implemented, however. From the historical system hypothesized here, it can be seen that there once were many valuable trade products from forest lands, and many remain that can be better utilized than at present.

The trade system that existed in the early centuries A.D., that is, ancient history,

cannot be recreated, but the knowledge of its existence and importance can be used to develop a new trading system that can function for the benefit of tribals, the environment, and national economies. I would argue that a historical approach to analyzing and understanding foraging societies today has greater value and relevance than a strictly evolutionary ecological approach, though elements of this paradigm can have its uses (Headland 1991; Stiles 1992a:15). In a world of rapidly changing priorities, anthropology itself has to adapt and evolve to survive. Relevance to contemporary concerns and problems is an adaptive strategy.

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ABSTRACT

Two paradigms have been used to describe the nature of twentieth-century hunter-gatherers, one focused on ecological approaches, the other emphasizing historical context. This paper examines how an ancient forager trading system might have

operated, using the Gujarati port city of Broach, India. Foragers supplied important wild products necessary for prestige goods exchange and for the maintenance of Asian religions. These products could be obtained more effectively and at lower cost by local foragers. Today, trading opportunities are fewer and the forest resources endangered, the result of modern destruction of forest habitat and appropriation of land.

KEYWORDS: hunter-gatherers, trade systems, Broach, northwestern India, South Asia.